

2 interviews #179 and 179-179-179

Solo interview
Project I.D. No 179

NAME: Obazawa, Yoshitane DATE OF BIRTH: 1888 PLACE OF BIRTH: Nagano-ken
Age: 89 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: High school

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1907 Age: 19 M.S. S Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Schoolboy 2. Store clerk 3. Managed a grocery store
Place of residence: 1. Seattle 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: _____
Name of relocation center: Minidoka, Idaho
Dispensation of property: Sold store Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Block manager 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Chicago

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1959
Address/es: 1. Pasadena 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: (1) Takarabe Date: 10/7/77 Place: Pasadena, Ca.
translator: Makel Hall

(2) Shigeo Takayama
translator: Terunikaida

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Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Yoshitane Obasawa.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born on June 15, 1888.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am 89 years and 4 months old.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Nagano Prefecture.

Q: Did many people come to America from Nagano Prefecture?

A: It was also called Shinshu.

Q: What was the occupation of your family?

A: My father came from a family of Shinto priests, and so was my mother. They could not make living as Shinto priests, so they farmed, also. My father was a school teacher. When the first normal school was established in Nagano prefecture, he took a test as he could write 1 to 10 in numerals, and passed the test. My grandfather was a teacher of a temple school, and taught Chinese literature. Hachimantaro Yoshiiye was the god of our shrine. In Hachiman shrine in Kamakura, the body of Hachimantaro Yoshiiye is enshrined. It is said that a part of his body was brought to our shrine and is enshrined there.

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During the Civil War there was Hiraga Genshin, a retainer of Takeda Shingen. He is the ancestor of our family. Later he became a priest. After I became a Christian I thought he must have been like a priest in the Bible.

Q: Was there a shrine on your premises?

A: Yes, there was. Inside the house was enshrined the charm from the Grand Shrine of Ise. As Japan is a country of many gods, it was said that the god of New Year would come on New Year's Day, so we had a separate place for the god of New Years.

Q: What was the duty of a priest?

A: As my father was a teacher and worked away from home, and my brother worked at a post office, I could not eat breakfast until I recited a Shinto ritual prayer on the first and the 15th of the month, and on other holidays from the time I started going to school.

Q: Did the neighbors come, too?

A: No, just our family. My house was away from other houses. There was a temple a little ways from my house. The Buddhist priests recited prayers early in the morning on the 1st and the 7th of the month. I could hear the sound of drums. These things were just rituals. I remember praying to unknown gods.

Q: Does the priest write the Shinto ritual prayer himself?

A: There is a prayer[↖] written, and the priest reads it. When I was a child I had to recite the prayer before meals. I was hungry so I recited the first part of the prayer in a loud voice, skipped the middle part and saying the last part ended it by clapping hands. My mother would say, "You said your prayer fast today", but I was so hungry that I started eating without answering her. I grew up without knowing the meaning of the prayer.

Q: How old were you when you started that?

A: I think I started it when I started going to school.

Q: Did you continue doing that?

A: My mother died when I was 12 years old, I remeber doing it till then.

Q: When your mother died, was the funeral in Shinto style?

A: Yes, it was. Even though my father was a Shinto priest, we had a Shinto priest come from outside. Buddhists do not serve fish at the funeral, but we served fish to guests who came to the funeral. It is the custom of the village that the members of the family do not work in the kitchen, so the neighbors cooked for us.

Q: Did your father officiate other funerals?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: How about weddings?

A: I do not remember my father officiating weddings as his main job was a school teacher.

Q: What do you remember about your school days?

A: When I was in grammar school, I lived only about 5 minutes' walk from the school. One day I played hookey from school with two of my friends and sat in the sun in front of a store selling ginseng. While three of us were sitting, one decided to go to school. When he went to school the teacher asked him where two other boys were, so he told the teacher that we were hiding. The teacher came looking for us but he did not find us. When we saw the teacher walking down the street, we ran to school. My father was a school teacher, and my grandfather was a teacher of a temple school. This teacher had learned Chinese literature from my grandfather before he attended a normal school, so I was not scolded although my buddy was scolded.

In those days grammar school was 4 years, and junior high school was 4 years. The 3rd and the 4th grades were together. One day no teacher came to our class till the end of one period. A teacher came and told the pupil to go home. When we left the classroom we shouted, "We are not coming to school since the teacher do not come to the class." The teacher told us to come back to the classroom. The athletic teacher who was teaching a school in the neighboring village heard about it and came to our class. He asked who the class president was. Not knowing that the class president was the village master's son he hit him,

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and made everyone go home. The next day 3 of us representing the whole class went to the village office protesting the fact that the athletic teacher hit the class president. The village master came out and settled the argument. The following year when we went to the high school, I found the same athletic teacher teaching there, and I felt embarrassed. That is the recollection of my grammar school days. I only remember bad things.

Q: Didn't your father stay home?

A: My father was away from home in those days.

Q: What kind of a woman was your mother?

A: Her father was a Shinto priest, also. I was the second son, and when I was born I was given the name of my mother's family. There were four daughters but no son in her family, so they took husbands. There were no son born to them, so they gave me the name Yamaguchi. After my mother died, and my grandfather died, a boy was born to my aunt. They lived in the mountain. When I was in the second year of highschool my name was changed back to Obasawa. Then I came to America.

Q: Till what grade did you go in highschool?

A: I was the second graduate of the highschool.

Q: How many years did you go to school by the time you graduated from highschool?

A: 13 years.

Q: Did you like school?

A: I liked school. I was the third from the top out of 53 pupils when I graduated from highschool. There ^{were} 8 classmates still alive by 1975.

Q: When did you come to America?

A: In November 1907.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was 19.

Q: What made you decide to come to America?

A: In those days two students could attend the Dobun Shoin in Shanghai at the expense paid by the prefecture. As I graduated third from the top, the principal of the highschool told me to take an exam. There were 16 highschools in Nagano Prefecture, and there were some who failed the test the year before, too, so there were 24 candidates. I did not pass the test. In those days people came to America as they thought something good will happen when they come to America.

Q: What kind of a country did you think America was?

A: I came to America thinking that money grows on trees. I came to America to study, but I did not have any definite idea what I wanted to study.

Q: Did you think it would work out somehow if you came to America?

A: Yes, I did. People on board the ship were saying that there are gold nuggets in Alaska. I said if I picked 2 or 3 nuggets I would have enough money to study. Then another man said he would pick up about 10 gold nuggets and go back to Japan.

When I came to America I wanted to go to Alaska, but a man who had been there before told me that I should not go there because I would become "headless." I did not know what he meant by "headless", but later I found out what he meant. In those days it took about a month to go from Seattle to a cannery in Alaska by a boat. As they did not have anything to do on the boat they gambled. The foreman who took the men there let them gamble. They knew what to do, so they let the people win on the way going there, but on the way back they won. By the time they came back to Seattle the people would lose everything they earned, and became "headless." Actually many people became "headless."

Q: Where did your ship leave from?

A: From Yokohama.

Q: Did you go to Yokohama alone?

A:

Q: Was there a physical examination before you left there?

A: There was an eye examination for trachoma.

Q: Did you pass the eye test without any trouble?

A: Yes, I did. I had epidemic ophthalmia before, so I received treatment from a doctor in town, and I also went to Takasaki for a treatment.

Q: Did you come to America soon after you graduated from highschool?

A: As I took the test and failed, I was thinking about coming to America. My brother's friend who was a principal of a grammar school asked me to teach Japanese history and geography, and for about half the time teach baseball. As I had learned Japanese history and geography in highschool, it was not hard to teach them. After I taught baseball my school won the championship among the grade school in the province. When we came back from the game the parents greeted us in the village. That night a victory party was held. and we were foreced to drink sake. As we drunk sake in empty stomach we got drunk, and 2 other teachers and I slept in the night duty room. There was one hard bread which Japanese soldiers broght home after winning the Russo-Japanese War, so three of us ate it to keep off hunger till morning as we had not eaten supper the night before. Next morning we went around the homes of the members of village assembly apoligizing for being drunk. They were the ones who made us drink, but we had to apologize. Japan is that kind of a place. When I came to America, the villagers gave me a farewell party.

Q: How long did you teach that school?

A: I taught from May to October, that is 6 months. My salary was 10 yen a month. That was pretty good for a substitute teacher because, those who graduated from a normal school used to get 14 yen a month.

Q: What do you remember about your voyage?

A: We slept on bunk beds. Before we landed we were given physical examinations for syphilis or other diseases. Many people got seasick and didn't eat until after passing the meridian. It took 18 days, but many people stayed in their bunks for the first 10 days.

Q: Were the passengers all men?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Weren't there any women passengers on board?

A: No, there wasn't. The passengers were all young men from around 18 to 20. It was 7 or 8 years later that women started coming to America.

Q: What else did you do on board the ship?

A: We had shows on the ship. After we felt better we walked on the deck and dreamed about what to do in America, and talked about finding gold in Alaska. Everybody was building castles in the air.

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Q: Where did you land?

A: In Seattle.

Q: Didn't you go to Alaska?

A: No, I didn't as I was told not to go there. I stayed at a rooming house managed by a church. A man who came to America half a year before me told me that church would find me a job free of charge, and if I went from the church, the employer would trust me. I went to church with no intention of becoming a Christian. I went to church to take advantage of the church. The church managed a rooming house to teach gospel to those people. The pastor and the elders encouraged me to be baptized, so I was baptized without knowing anything about Christianity. It was much later that I thought it was God's will that I joined the church so that I won't get into temptation being separated from parents and living as I pleased.

Q: What church was it?

A: Methodist church. In those days it was called the Methodist Episcopal Mission. Later it was called the Methodist Church.

Q: How long did you live in Seattle?

A: I stayed there until the war broke out. I worked in the neighboring ranches, and also picked hops. Those who did not work in canneries did farm labor. Also some people worked as laborers on the Northern Pacific Railway and Great Northern Railway. When I came here in November of 1907 that kind of work was finished. Those who came here around August could work there.

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This is my first experience. There were about 4 double beds in one room, and I slept on one of them alone. When I woke up there was a man sleeping on the same bed. Lying down on the bed he told me that he worked 35 days in August and 35 days in September. I thought he talked strange as there are 31 days in August and 30 days in September. Later I found out that they figured 10 hours as a day, so if they worked 350 hours a month that was the same as working 35 days. Much later, around 1920 the work hours became 8 hours a day. Around the time I came here, people looked for a job in which they had to work on Sundays because if they don't work on Sundays they don't get paid. There was such a time.

Q: Could you speak English in those days?

A: I thought I could speak English, but they didn't understand me.

A man who came here before me found a job for me. The day after I came here I went for the interview of the job. My job was to start a fire in the kitchen in the morning. I had never worked in the kitchen in Japan. Furthermore, in those days in Seattle they burned firewood in the stove. Later I found out that I had to crumple some newspaper into balls and put some small pieces of wood on it and light the paper. I did not know it, so I just burned some newspaper but the firewood did not catch fire. When the wife of the house came up she found the house filled with smoke.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: I worked as a schoolboy and attended a grade school, but I spent all the money I brought from Japan, so I went to help my friend who was growing strawberry on Vashon Island from around April to August. From September I attended a grade school on Vashon Island. I worked at a home of an elderly couple whose son was a lawyer in Seattle. My job was to milk two cows in the morning and in the evening, and gather eggs from about two dozen hens. There was a grade school in front of the house. The house was standing on 20 acres with many fruit trees, cows and chicken. I was paid \$2 a month with room and board for working in the morning and in the evening, and attended a school. In the falls there were baseball rounaments between our school and the neighboring grade school. Older pupils around 12 and 13 played, and even the principal and I joined the game. While I was playing the game, the time came for me to milk the cows, so I said[±] had to go home to milk the cows. A teacher sent a messenger to my home saying that I could not come home to milk the cows that evening. When I finished the game and went home the master asked me if our team won the game, so I told them that we lost. The following week we played in the neighboring village, so I told my master that I would not be home to milk the cows.

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Had I stayed there, my English would have improved. A man who came here with me had just grammar school education. He worked for the railroad, and for about the first 3 months he could not send any money home as he had to buy clothes and other things, but from about the fourth month he sent \$25 which was about 50 yen a month to Japan. My brother was working at a post office. People would say to him, "If a man who had just grammar school education can send 50 yen a month, your brother who has graduated from highschool must send a lot of money home." My brother said he was embarrassed, so he told me that I had better send some money home. Up to that time I had saved \$30 picking strawberry and working in greenhouse in summertime. When I left Japan I sold the property given to me by my mother's family for about 300 yen which was more than enough for the passage. Most people brought about 100 yen and borrowed some more. We had to have \$50 for show money. My grandmother gave me 10 yen, and with parting present I received I had altogether about \$60. Since I spent all of it I picked strawberry. I had about \$300 when my brother told me to send some money home, but I sent half of it which was the same amount I brought from Japan. I said if I sent more money I could not study. That problem was settled then.

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After that I went to Seattle. Since I attended a school for a year on Vashon Island I could understand English a little better than other people. A man who owned Jakson Fish asked me to help him, so I worked there for about 3 years. That is why I missed a chance of goingⁿ to school. Then I heard that there was a tour group going to Japan, so I joined the group and went to Japan. Before that I loaned^{\$300} which was a part of the money I saved working in the fish store^{to} a man who was going to buy land on Vashon Island, and went to Japan with the rest of the money.

When I went to Japan, a brother of the man who used to send \$50 to Japan every month came to see me and told me that his brother had stopped sending money or writing to him. When I asked him if he knew what kind of work his brother did, he answered he didn't know. I told him that his brother worked as a laborer on the railroad. In those days people in Japan thought that kind of work was for rough men. He sent about \$1,000 in about 3 years working on the railroad thinking that his brother would get back the land he mortgaged. However, his brother had spent the money in drinks and left the land in mortgage. That is why the man was provoked and quit sending the money. He died in America without marrying and having a family. I told his brother that it is only right that he quit sending money to his brother who drank the money he sent by working on the railroad, and did not even get the land out of the mortgage. This man had \$1,000 sent him from America, but let his brother waste his life in America without a family.

At that time I got married and came back to America.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was 26 years old. I came here when I was 19, and went back to Japan when I was 25. In those days we had to go by ship, so it took 6 months to go and come back from Japan. I went to Japan in November, and came back to America in April of the following year. After I came back to Japan I applied for temporary exemption from draft. My wife came to America a year later as she was a school teacher and had an obligatory term of service. After she joined me, a real life in America began. Until then I led a life of a bachelor.

Q: Did you say you were 26 years old?

A: Yes, my wife was the same age as I was.

Q: How did you find your wife?

A: A scribe of the province office acted as a go-between, but I knew her a little before. When I was a substitute teacher, my wife was a student of a normal school and visited my school. I used to teach with a woman teacher who graduated 2 years before her.

My wife was the only daughter. She had a younger brother, but when he died we had to go back to Japan. By that time it was too late for me to start all over in Japan as it was 20 years after I graduated from highschool. Those who went to highschool with me had already graduated from universities. Four classmates had graduated from the Marine School and had become first class pilots of ships.

I went to the consulate to see if I could summon my wife's parents here. Fortunately I knew a man who had graduated from Waseda University and ^{was} stricken with pleurisy before he came to America. In those days I was in business, ^{when} so he ran out of money he came to my store and volunteered to help me unpack merchandise. His brother rose to the rank of lieutenant general in the Japanese Army, and because of the war he was promoted to a general. His name was Ninomiya. He was a drinking friend of a man who was in charge of legal procedures. He went to the consulate and talked to his friend there. When he came back he told me to submit a petition in my wife's name, and I as a guarantor. When we did so, he told us we could call my wife's parents. In 1922 her parents came from Japan. At that time I owned a house.

Q: Were they your wife's parents?

A: Yes, they were. When they came here my father-in-law was 70 years old. My mother-in-law was about 15 years younger. Her father was a principal retainer of a feudal lord. This lord ^r turned all his land to the Emperor and became the president of the Bureau of Decoration. However, his retainers were pressed for money as they could not receive wages any more. My father-in-law was a very civilized man in those days. He taught village administration to villagers. He went to each of 26 villages in the prefecture, and staying there from 6 months to a year taught village administration. At the end he came back to his village and served as a village master for about 3 years. My wife's family, also, were leaders of the village. After ^{coming} ~~they came~~ to America, my father

America my father-in-law was awarded silver cups from the prefectural office and from the villages for his contribution to the village administration. He received 10 yen from his village, and it was sent to him by money order. In those days it was a little over \$3 in American money. My parents-in-law died in America, and their graves are in Seattle.

Q: What did you do after you got married and came back to America?

A: I got in retail business of Japanese food. A man who came here before me had gone into business with a partner who was selling food to a cannery in Alaska. The business was not good as there were old debts, so they went bankrupt. I bought the business, and it went well so I bought a house and summoned my inlaws. I was the only one who could summon parents as permanent residents, Other people had to put up \$500 gurantee fund, but could not summon their parents.

Q: What kind of business were you in then?

A: I was in retail business of Japanese food.

Q: Was there Furuya Company in Seattle then?

A: Yes, it was.

~~Q: Was it a big store?~~

~~A: I stocked goods from Furuya Company~~

Q: Was it a big store?

A: I bought goods from Furuya Company, but there were many other wholesalers. Furuya Company tried wholesale and retail, so my store was in the way of their business. Other wholesalers wanted me to buy their good, so they helped me. There were competitions. I did not have money, but I had to pay only \$15 for \$100 debt. I paid \$15 to Furuya Company, but other wholesalers let me pay \$15 little by little if I bought their goods. Around the time World War I started many brides came from Japan. Most of them were highschool graduates and did not know how to cook. I bought kitchen ^{en}utensils and sold them to the brides, so the business was good. I made money for about the first 5 years.

Q: When did you start the business?

A: I started it in 1915.

Q: Did you continue the business for a long time?

A: I continued till 1929. Then I changed from Japanese food to the Western food.

Q: Why did you change?

A: Many Japanese who were laborers before started the same kind of business, so I lost customers. Those who had the white customers from the beginning were all right, but I changed in the middle. It was the time the China Incident started and the popularity of Japanese had gone down. Then the Depression came. Even the white ^{mother} ~~father~~ and ^{daughter} ~~son~~ who earned about \$600 a month became penniless. At the time the labor movement was started to exclude

Q: Was it in Seattle?

A: Yes, it was in Seattle. At that time I was the executive director of the grocers association.

Q: Was it ^a Japanese grocers' association?

A: Yes, it was. There were about 200 grocery stores. They were all papa and mama stores ran by husbands and wives. Our children were big so they helped the store. I was the executive director without pay. In other business president, vice president and treasurer are not paid, but most executive directors are paid, so the labor unions wanted me to attend their meetings. I told them that if I did that I could not do my business. They said, "Aren't you the executive director?", so I replied, "I am an executive director, but I but I am a non-paid executive director."

At that time I refused a job I was offered because I was a Christian. That is, the Budwiser Company wanted me to be the sole distributor among Asians. They just wanted to use my name as I had credit among the Japanese society. They offered to pay me $2\frac{1}{2}$ cent for every case of beer sold if they used my name. It would have amounted to about \$75. But as an officer of a Christian church I could not have them use my name as a sole distributor of Budwiser beer, so I refused the offer. It was during the Depression and I needed the money. On top of that I became ill, but later I am glad I did not become the sole distributor of Budwiser beer because I did not sin against the church as a Christian. I could not be a sole distributor of beer when I was an officer of the Methodist church.

Q: Did you know Mr. Mihara in those days?

A: He was managing a restaurant. On his way home from the restaurant he passed by the police station and wondered why so many policemen were gathered. When he came home he found out that the FBI were there to pick him up.

Q: Did you continue the business till 1929?

A: I continued it till 1939, the year before the war broke out.

Q: How was it during the Depression?

A: I managed the business somehow, but I had to move when the lease was up and a gasoline station was going to be built there. I was tired^d and the business was not good, and the church was in financial difficulty, so I quit the business the year before the war broke out. Those who did not support the church saying that they did not have the money had \$3,000 to \$5,000 in the bank. I was the treasurer of the church. There was a check from the county but I could not cash it as I had not paid the tax. I took the check to the store where the church had bought a piano before and forced them to cash it. As I said before, people who had lots of money did not support the church. That is why by the time I went to Chicago I had my mind made up not to go to church. I went to Chicago from the detention camp.

Q: Didn't you have much difficulties during the Depression?

A: I was in financial difficulties, but as I was in business I did not find it hard to live.

Q: How did you feel when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: We were having a meeting at church on that Sunday afternoon.

Rev. Machida was our pastor. When we heard that the war had broken out we broke up the meeting and came home. We were worried what would become of us. People were taken away from left to right, so I got ready to leave, too. As I had quit the business a year before that, I had another person take over the executive director's job of the grocers' union. That person was taken away by the F.B.I. We had to leave our home. Before that the F.B.I. agents came to our house 2 or 3 times. In those days we did not have televisions, but we had radios. The F.B.I. agent said, "Let's hear your shortwave radio," but we did not have a shortwave radio. I did some advertising of the Sea Island Sugar before, so I had some pamphlets in the garage. I told the F.B.I. agents that they can see the pamphlets, but I want them to put them back where they were before. They asked me what I thought about the war, so I asked them, "What would you do if the house you are renting is on fire?" "Don't you think you should put out the fire? I am living temporarily in America. I bought a house, but it was for my children. As I cannot become an American citizen, America is my temporary house. As my temporary house is on fire, am I not supposed to put out the fire?" The F.B.I. agent did not ask any further questions.

I had bought a house in my child's name, so we had a guardian. He was a lawyer, and a Captain in American Army. When I went to see him around August before the war started, his partner told me that he had gone ^{to a} ~~for~~ the military training. I asked his partner to let me know when he came home. He came home on weekend and asked me what I wanted. I asked him what ^{become of us} would if a war broke out. He said, "Don't worry, I will stand surety for you." That is why I was feeling easy. I could live more peacefully than other people, but as I was expecting the F.B.I. agents to come, I got ready to leave. After all I was not taken away by the F.B.I. I went to camp with everybody else.

Q: What did you do with your house?

A: I asked a real estate to rent my house for me. My daughter was married, and her husband was an American citizen, so they could get the house. I did not have the money to pay the lawyer then, so I promised to pay him later. The house was in my daughter's name. She had a child. After we left the camp and ^{en} ~~went~~ to Chicago we sold the house. We bought the house for \$5,000, but sold it for \$2,500, and we still owed 1,000, so we got only \$1,500. The person who bought the house sold it to a Japanese for \$5,000 after 2 years. He made \$2,500 in 2 years.

Q: What did you do with your household goods?

A: I rent the house with the furnitures in it. Later, my daughter's husband went into service, and went to Seattle before he went to Europe. He was in uniform, but he did not want to walk by himself, so he walked with a Chinese friend and stayed at the Chinese friend's house. After coming home from Europe he put the house up for sale, so the tenant vacated the house. The house was supposed to be vacant, but someone was living in it. When he reported that to the Army, they locked up the house. He sent for his furnitures from Chicago, and found out that there were more furnitures than he left. The person who bought the house sent my son the hina dolls. Of course this man made \$2,500 profit.

Q: Was your camp at Minidoka?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: How was Minidoka?

A: I worked as a block manager there. It was ^avery annoying ^{job.} As poeple did not have anybody to complain to, they came to the block manager to complain. There I found the truth about some Christians. Frankly speaking, many people who claimed to be Christians were not different from non-Christians. At that time I faced a crisis that I did not have to go to church. More Christians complained, but Buddhists were resigned themselves. I think, knowing that I was a Christian, the Christians came and complained to me.

There was a Nisei youth who enlisted in the Army. He was brought up in Seattle, but he could not speak Japanese. He came to see me when I was not home, so my wife told him to go into service without worrying about his parents as we could look after them. He said, "Thank you" and went home. He went to Europe and died there. We held a memorial service for him in Chicago. His mother died in camp, too.

Those who returned to church were the ones who worked at the branch office of the WRA, and many of them came from Seattle. They wrote about us in a weekly newspaper. The residents of the district where I moved in made agreements not to rent houses to Japanese. One day a white church member came to visit me. When I asked him how he found out about us, he told me that he read about us in the weekly newspaper. That person happened to be our neighbor who agreed not to rent houses to Japanese. As he was our neighbor, it wouldn't look good if we didn't go to church, so I started going to church again. When we went to church, our grandchild had to stay home with her mother. As her husband was in Europe, my daughter was very irritable and used to scold her child. She did not need anybody but grandmother, so my wife had to change her clothes in the basement and sneaked out from the back door. I went out from the front door. We came from the church as soon as the church was over. Some people who ^went to Chicago from the camp wanted to talk to us, so they went to the church. They claimed that we saw them, but we went home pretending that we did not see them. A person who was not a member of the church told us that.

Q: What other troubles did you have when you were a block manager in the camp?

A: Many Christmas presents were delivered to the camp from outside, but I did not know how to celebrate Christmas as half of the people in the camp were non-Christians. One night I heard Christmas carol sung by children in one room. That family did not have parents, but just children, so we celebrated Christmas with them. We distributed Christmas presents that came from outside. All the children in that family except the oldest and the youngest were crippled. After their mother died, their father left home leaving the children behind. They lived near Tacoma, Washington. Their father went to Oregon and worked in a sawmill. When the war broke out the father was taken to a camp in Oregon, and the children went to Minidoka. When the children found out where their father was, they welcomed him to Minidoka. The children were small when the father left, but when he came back they have grown up to be young ladies, so he could not stay in the same room with them. He moved to a bachelor's quarter. I learned about Japanese families in Seattle and in the camp. We held Christmas party around those girls.

Beside that, there were people who were arrogant, so it was hard to put up with them, but I managed to live there . I left for Chicago in 1944, a year before the camp was closed. When I went to Chicago I had my mind made up never to go to church again.

Q: What did you do in Chicago?

A: I worked at a cafeteria of the National Food Company which sold groceries from the wholesalers to the retailers. Before that, I worked as a dishwasher for a year. There was no dishwashing machine then. A year before the war broke out the National Food Company was incorporated with many small grocers. As the war started it was not allowed to make peacetime machines, so there were no dishwashing machines made. I lined a pan which had a hole in it with a towel, and put hot water in it. I ^Swashed the dishes, and the person next to me rinsed ^{them} and the third person dried them. I did that for a year. After the war ended the company bought a dishwasher, but by that time my job was to brew coffee all day. I used 28 pounds of coffee, 2 pounds at a time. I made 40 cups of coffee out of a pound of coffee. There were 1,200 workers who did not come to the cafeteria. They drank coffee at 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. They were paid \$1 an hour with free coffee. The coffee for those who came to the cafeteria was made by other people, but when they ran out of coffee they came to get my coffee. I was busy as I had to wash the coffee urn. I worked there for 15 years as I could get the pension if I worked 15 years. When I was working as a dishwasher, Ichiro Ogata worked with me. Later he went to college and then to a theological seminary and became a pastor.

Q: Did you work there till around 1960?

A: My 15 years were up in 1959. I wanted to work till the end of 1959, but in those days many people were getting out of service, and older people were in their way, so they wanted older people to retire. When I told them that I wanted to work till the end of the year, I was told that I should retire as I was old, so I retired with 15 years. They gave me a week's salary as the separation money. I found out that they give farewell presents in the white society, too. Even the workers I didn't know gave 25¢, and those who worked with me gave \$2 and \$3. Altogether they collected about \$100 and gave it to me with all the names on a long sheet of paper. I came to Sierra Madera with about \$10,000.

Q: When I came ^{here}, you were new here too, weren't you?

A: Yes, I was in the second year here. I came the same year as Rev. Kawashima. Two years after I came here Rev. Kawashima started coming to ^{your} church. Before that he used to go around the white churches.

Q: What year did you come back here?

A: Around November of 1959.

T: Then I came here before you. I came here in 1957.

O: If I think about it I came from Japan in November, and came to Pasadena in November.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time for you?

A: I think it was during the Depression. In those days my business was not good, and on top of that I became ill. Our daughter was in the first year of college, and our son was in highschool. Before that we lost a son. My wife went to Japan with our daughter and son before we summoned her parents here. On the way back our son caught a flu on board the ship. I thought he recovered from it, but it damaged his heart. He lived till he was 7 years old. I lost a son, the business was bad, and I became ill. We had inlaws with us. I thought if I died, my wife would be in difficulty. That was the time I worried ^{the} most.

Q: How long were you ill?

A: I was told that I could be in grocery business, but I could not carry any heavy load, therefore I could not work.

Q: What kind of illness was it?

A: It was stomach ulcer. Year after that I had appendicitis. When I had appendectomy they found out the cause of my stomach ulcer. Since I was born, a part of the small intestine was compressed, so the food was not going down well. I had ulcer in 1934, and appendicitis in 1935. Because of the appendicitis I found out the cause of the illness, and as the result I became well.

In 1935 there was an annual conference of the Methodist churches, and I went to Los Angeles with a pastor as a delegate of the church in Seattle. Since then I learned about the operation of the church. It was a good training for me. I go to a Presbyterian church. Presbyterian and Methodist churches have different methods, and each has good points and bad points. Rev. Kikuchi was the pastor for 2 years. In my time we did not pay the pastor well. A newspaperman wrote in his column that it is good to go to church, but how about the people who criticise the pastor's sermon on their way home from church. Those who criticized the pastor were devout members of the church. There was such a time.

I thought the church was getting enough money from the headquarter, I didn't know that the headquarter was getting the money from local churches every year. Japanese churches were getting subsidy from the headquarter. They were called the mission as they were not financially independent. Until 1930 the church in Seattle was actually a mission although it was called a church. Mr. Smith of _____ told old Rev. Yamaka that we should not be getting the subsidy too long. When I asked how much subsidy we were getting, I was told that we were receiving \$75 a month, \$900 a year. When asked how much share of expenses we were paying, we found out that we were paying about \$1,000. When I asked if we could pay \$100 as our share of expenses if we did not receive any subsidy, the pastor said it would be all right. So we decided not to get any subsidy and pay \$100 as our share of expense, and we became independent. The headquarter told us that if we were financially independent we should pay

about \$500 as our share. In 1930 the new pastor came. Then the Depression came, and naturally we could not pay our share of expenses. At that time I was the chairman of the finance committee of the church. As I told you before, members who had \$3,000 to \$5,000 in the bank gave only about a dollar a month for the support of the church, and 25¢ for offering. They paid only about \$30 a year including Christmas and Easter offerings. Moreover, they were officers of the church. I had to borrow money from the bank to manage the finance. I had to buy stocks, too, as people thought I was rich for owning a home although I owed \$1,000 in mortgage. When the bank went bankrupt, \$300 that my mother-in-law had saved was frozen. After 5 years the money was returned with $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ interest.

The women's association of the church had about \$1,000. They bought the neighboring building as the educational building, and was supposed to pay \$30 a month to the bank, but they could not pay. They bought the building for \$3,000 and paid \$1,500 down, so they owed \$1,500. As they did not pay, the interest accumulated and owed more than \$1,500, so they asked me to do something about it. In those days my children were young, so I had white lawyers as trustees. There were 5 of them, and I and another man went to talk to them. As we did not have any good solution, we decided that each pay \$1, and we collected \$7. Then we went back to the church and asked the members to give \$1 each. At that time we collected \$60 to \$70.

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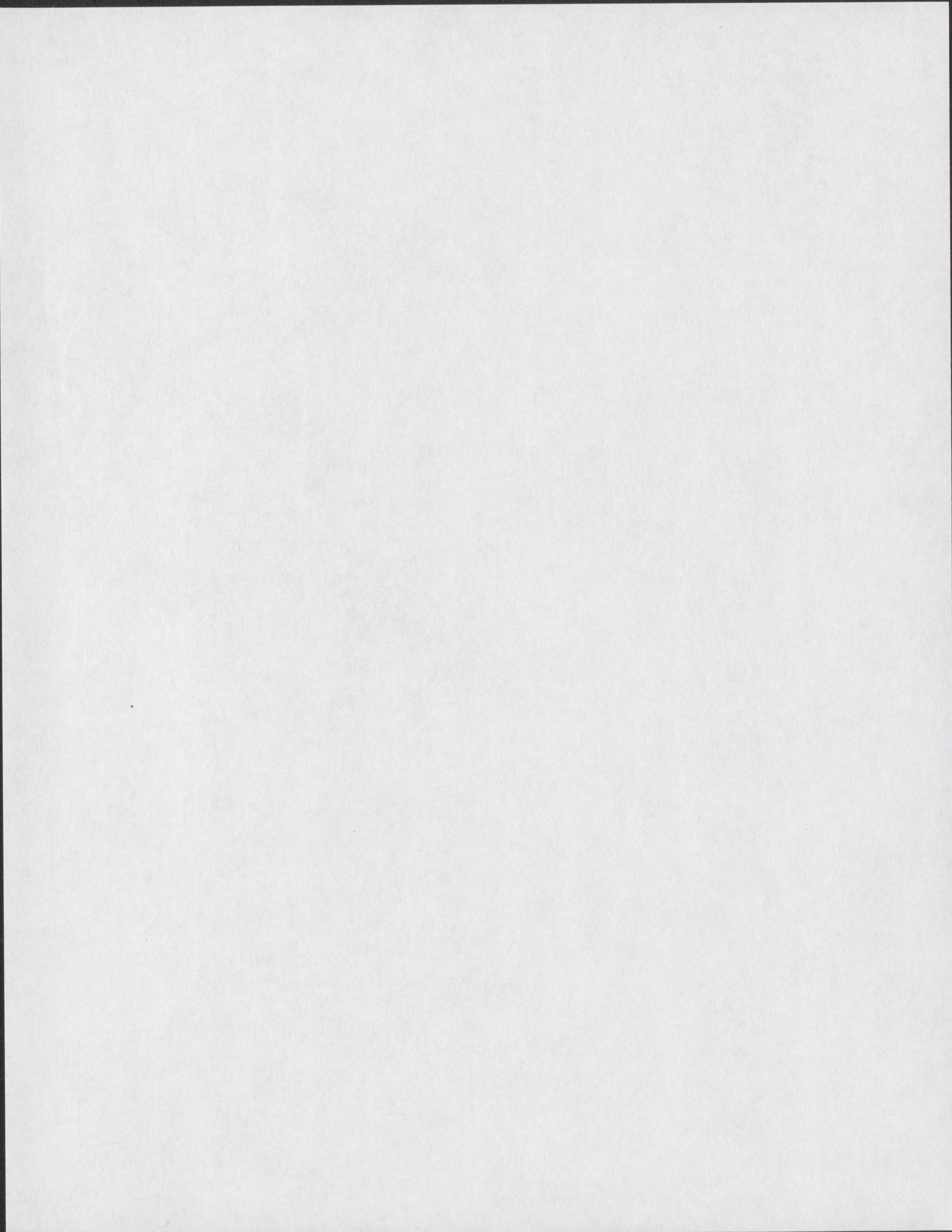
I took the money and paid into our mortgage. We were going to collect a dollar a person every month, but we needed someone to collect the money. I suggested that we double the offering we used to give to church on Christmas and Easter, and we decided to do that. There were some members who gave only about a dollar as Christmas offering. We asked them to give \$2. We asked those who used to give \$5, to give \$7 or \$8. There were only one or two people who used to give \$10. They were financially well off, so they gave about \$15. We used to collect about \$300 at Easter and Christmas, but that was increased to about \$500, so we paid \$400 a year ^{to} Washington Mutual Savings Bank. After about 2 years the balance came down to about \$700, so we paid off the mortgage. The head of the mortgage department saw me and told me that he would lend us money anytime we needed it. But we did not borrow again as we did not have to.

Up to that time the church was in financial difficulties. As I told you before, I had to force the store where the church bought a piano to cash a check from the county. In those days people who worked at city and county offices could not cash their checks. Some of them had to take discount on their checks to make a living. When I paid the wholesalers they did not want me to give just checks. If I had to pay \$100, they wanted me to pay at least \$50 in cash. That kind of condition continued for about 3 years.

Q: Was it during the Depression?

A: Yes, it was. As I told you before, a mother and daughter who had about \$600 income from the stock became penniless and received welfare which was \$1.25 a week for a person and later went up to \$2.50 a week. They could buy milk and bread with \$1.25, but they could not buy any food with sugar in it. They bought Navy beans for 5¢ a pound and bought salted pork which was about 20¢ a pound as they could not afford bacon. They cooked pork and beans with that and lived on it. There was such a time.

I had already quit the grocery business when the war broke out. One day I got a phonecall from a man who had a grocery store wanting to see me. When I went to see him, his wife told me that he had started working at a Naval shipyard and gets paid every week. He thought I was in need, so they had bought some grocery and gave them to me. Some people gave me about \$5 in cash. When I met a bread deliveryman on the street he said, "It was not my fault or your fault" and gave me some bread and rolls. When I went to visit him after the war he had already quit delivering bread. His two sons had gone to war, and he lost one of them. When I visited him he showed me the old pictures of picnics we had together. His wife gave jam to me and my friend who took him there. They lost a son by the war and yet they were so kind. From that respect I think Americans are greater than Japanese.



YOSHITANE OBAZAWA

Interviewed by Shigeo Takayama

Translated by Mrs. Haru Nikaido

unnumbered interview

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IN JAPAN

Takayama: Where were you born?

Obazawa: NaganO-ken.

Takayama: When were you born?

Obazawa: June 15, 1888

Takayama: Do you remember anything about wars? Sino-Japanese war? Russo-Japanese war? World War I, Manchurian event?

Obazawa: I was a child during the Sino-Japanese war. All I knew is that we won. During the Russo-Japanese war, I was a high school student and I remember well how Japan was a militaristic nation.

Takayama: Do you remember anything else?

Obazawa: Just that we were winning and there was lots of confusion.

Takayama: Do you remember World War I?

Obazawa: I was already in the United States and had a business called "Nippon Shokuryo Shin", retailing in Japanese food. Times were good and I was making money. Ha, ha, ha.

Takayama: How about the Manchurian event?

Obazawa: It was during the 1930's and the depression had started. Nippon-jin weren't popular so we had it pretty hard.

Takayama: Do you remember any events like tsunami, earthquakes, plagues?

Obazawa: There weren't very many of us Japanese boys that attended high school in those days. For many of us it (uniforms) was the first time in our lives that we wore European clothes.

Takayama: How about the Kanto-daishinsai? (earthquake)

Obazawa: I was in America then, a grocery man and president of the Japanese Grocers Association. We sent two tons of flour overseas to Japan thru the main relief agencies. The boats took it free.

Takayama: When was it?

Obazawa: It was 19 ? Oh, I forgot already. I guess 1922 or 1923.

Takayama: Religion of family?

Obazawa: Sinto

Takayama: Did you hear anything about Christianity in Japan?

- Obazawa: I heard a missionary two or three times when the principal of our school invited him. He was from Canada; from an Episcopal church. I listened to him but I didn't know what he was talking about. I didn't have the "ears" to listen to religion in those days.
- Takayama: How old were you then?
- Obazawa: I was 15 or 16 years old.
- Takayama: How was the condition of your family when you left Japan?
- Obazawa: I came by boat to Seattle. The Japanese community was nothing but males. When we saw a Japanese woman we exclaimed, "there goes a Japanese woman!". Every boatload had nothing but boys; 300 each time. The boats came every two weeks by way of NYK (Nippon Yusen Kaisha) Line. During 1907, 1908 and 1909 at least 500 boys came over each month.
- Takayama: Where was your family then?
- Obazawa: My family was in Japan. I had none in United States.
- Takayama: How about your brothers and sisters?
- Obazawa: I had none in the US. I came alone. In those days, everybody came alone.
- Takayama: How many in your family?
- Obazawa: Three brothers and four sisters.
- Takayama: When you came over were your parents still living?
- Obazawa: My mother had passed away. My father was living in Japan.
- Takayama: How much formal education did you have?
- Obazawa: I graduated chugakko (high school); 12 years altogether.
- Takayama: What was the reason why you came over to the USA?
- Obazawa: To make money! Ha, ha, ha!
- Takayama: Were you going to return to Japan?
- Obazawa: In those days everybody had intentions to get rich and return to Japan.
- Takayama: Isseis were all like that weren't they?
- Obazawa: If they saved \$1000. they were going back to Japan.

Takayama: Did you pay for your food?

Obazawa: Yes, I paid for my food. I worked among the railroads which had gangs of 20 to 30 men in each group. They had one or two men doing the cooking and since they didn't know how to cook we were eating dumplings everyday. Until finally our eyesight became bad and one of the men went to the doctor and was told we had to eat chicken.

ON THE SHIP

Takayama: When did you leave Japan? Did you go through Hawaii?

Obazawa: In 1907. Straight from Yokohama to Seattle.

Takayama: What kind of people were on the ship?

Obazawa: All kinds of people wanting to come to the US. There was a Christian group called "rekkgai" who looked after anybody going overseas. I had to join it as my family thought it would be better. In order to go overseas one had to have \$50. Some didn't have \$50 so they had to borrow from someone who had it. Sometimes the same \$50 would be borrowed several times however they ask to see it everytime.

Takayama: Were there farmers and etc. among you?

Obazawa: Yes, there were farmers. I came when 19 years of age - just being graduated from high school.

Takayama: What kind of ship?

Obazawa: It was the Tosa Maru - it was a very small ship; only 5000 tons from the NY K line.

Takayama: Do you remember anything which happened on the ship?

Obazawa: I sure do! The ship was like a transport for animals - not human beings. They had shelves on the walls and we slept on the shelves. It was my first time I had such an experience.

Takayama: What kind of food did you have?

Obazawa: It was Japanese style.

Takayama: Did they have blankets?

Obazawa: No, we took our own blankets.

Takayama: Do you remember anything special on the ship?

Obazawa: It was the first time for everybody to go to sea; everybody got seasick. Ha, ha, ha. Everybody was flat on their back. However, towards the end of the trip, the boys felt better and up on the deck.

Takayama: How long did it take?

Obazawa: 18 days. Ha, ha, ha.

Takayama: What was your expectation of America?

Obazawa: I thought I could make money here very easily. As I think of it now, it's very funny. We heard there was a gold rush in Alaska, not knowing it wasn't in the spendable form, we thought we could go there and just spend it right away.

Takayama: When you came to the US you had \$50 didn't you?

Obazawa: Yes, I had more than \$50.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA

Takayama: What was your first impression of America?

Obazawa: It was in winter and cold when I arrived in US. They were getting ready for the 1908 presidential election. Also, it was like a depression. Many of us had no jobs. The railroad companies foresaw this and started recruiting us. It was called the Oriental Trading Company but actually it was an office to recruit railroad labor camp workers. The Great Northern, The Northern Pacific and The Oregon Washington railroads received us; at times they were 2000 Japanese working for them. One didn't have to have experience for this kind of work so many boys worked and saved. Then they branched off into other kinds of work as hotel men, grocery men and etc.

Takayama: Did you work for the railroads?

Obazawa: No, I didn't. I was going to go however, a friend persuaded me not to go. I went to school instead.

Takayama: Which school did you go to?

Obazawa: An elementary school to learn English.

Takayama: How did the immigration officers treat you?

Obazawa: When I arrived it wasn't bad. There was a rumor that there was a difference between the San Francisco and Seattle immigration offices. That the Seattle office was much more sincere. This word reached Japan and people started landing in Seattle even though they had to make their way down south to California. So, I used to hear remarks from the boys that landed in Seattle that they were going to "Riverside". Riverside meant that they were going to Riverside, California to pick oranges. Presently, in our church there are some members that arrived via Seattle to California like Mr. Sakamoto and Mr. Aisawa.

Takayama: After they got off the ship did they work on the railroads to make money to go to Riverside?

Obazawa: Those that wanted to go to Riverside as their destination went straight to Riverside.

Takayama: What did you do when you landed in America for the first time? Jobs?

Obazawa: I did schoolboy work in a home at first. A friend started a strawberry patch and he asked me to help so I went there afterwards. There again, nothing but males - ha, ha, ha.

Takayama: Did you live in a farm camp?

Obazawa: The land owner went away for a business trip so fortunately, we got to live in his house.

Takayama: How did the white people treat you?

Obazawa: All right. The white people knew we were young boys so they treated us as such.

Takayama: Memories concerning various situations - happy experiences, sad experiences, funny ones, bad ones and etc.

Obazawa: At the time of my arrival in US, I suffered mentally. In Japan the menfolk do no laundry. When I went as a schoolboy here in the US, they told me to do laundry. In Japan the boys never do laundry and weren't even allowed in the kitchen. I hated kitchen work. Later on, I had another schoolboy job where I milked two cows, picked up two dozen eggs daily before attending school. One day when I was milking the cow, the cow put his foot in the bucket and spilled the milk. Thereupon, I became angry and hit the cow. When I told the employer this, he asked me if I had hit the cow. The answer being in the affirmative I never milked that cow again. Every time I went near that animal she used to kick me.

Takayama: How about your happy experiences?

Obazawa: When I was on Vashon Island and the farm people started raising strawberries for the first time, a Christian minister came from Japan, December 1908 and spoke to us. People all lived in tents then and there were no flush toilets. There were no restaurants so I was glad when my employer invited this minister over for a chicken dinner.

There were about 50 strawberry patches on Vashon Island then, but as it got crowded the people moved to Bainbridge Island to raise strawberries. In the beginning they borrowed each others tools.

Takayama: How about your sad experiences?

Obazawa: Oh, that was when they made me launder. Ha, ha, ha.

SETTLEMENT

Takayama: How did you find your bride?

Obazawa: In 1913, I returned to Japan and I knew her before. In those days they had go between (baishakkunin). So I went back and they fixed me up.

Takayama: What kind of a wedding ceremony did you have? Where?

Obazawa: The girls parents, the bride and a girl friend came to my house. We drank sake three times; this was the custom and it is called "sakazuke". The ceremony was finished and then we registered at the city hall.

Takayama: Where was your home then?

Obazawa: Nagano-ken. My big brother was head of the family then. If you see the registration book, it will note my big brother's name and my name. This was in 1914.

Takayama: Do you remember any interesting stories about picture brides?

Obazawa: No.

Takayama: Have you ever been homesick?

Obazawa: My friend used to weep in his sleep but the following day he would be normal.

Takayama: What kind of hardship did you have in order to get used to the American way of life?

Obazawa: It was a labor camp; I had backaches. Nevertheless, we were young.

Takayama: Have you ever been discriminated?

Obazawa: I have never had an opportunity to stand up against a white. The only time was when I was buying a house; it was in my daughter's name and rather inconvenient.

Takayama: How did you learn English?

Obazawa: I went to school about two years. My pronunciation was bad because I was in the midst of Japanese most of the time. However, I could write.

Takayama: How much income did you have?

Obazawa: Laborers got about 10¢ an hour. In 1913, when I went to Japan I paid the round trip ticket and still had \$300 leftover. At that time, it was great! I went round trip to Japan for \$125. It included Osaka, Nagoya, Kamakura, Nara and Tokyo. Ha, ha, ha.

Takayama: When did you buy a house? How much? Where?

Obazawa: In 1920. For \$4000. And with great difficulty. There were only a few people who owned homes then. And we had to pay \$25 a year to a lawyer who stood as a guardian because we bought in our children's names.

Takayama: What were your first organizations that you belonged to?

Obazawa: My first organizations were church organizations (kyokai), native state organization (kenjinkai), Japanese organization (Nipponjinkai), and Japanese Grocers Association.

Takayama: Did they help you in anyway?

Obazawa: No, I helped them. I did not need help.

Takayama: What kind of entertainment, hobbies, and other things did you enjoy?

Obazawa: Belonging to these organizations I had no time for hobbies.

Takayama: Did you like baseball?

Obazawa: Yes, I liked baseball. I used to take my children and go see the baseball games.

Takayama: You did like athletics?

Obazawa: Yes, I liked athletics from the time I was in Japan.

Takayama: Have you seen baseball games for a long time?

Obazawa: Yes, even when I was a grocer I used to see baseball occasionally. My bread man knew I was executive secretary of the Japanese Grocers Association so annually as a treat he'd take ^{me} on the opening day. He'd explain to my wife that this was the only time he was taking me away from the grocery.

Takayama: What do you remember about rearing children?

Obazawa: When my boy wanted to go swimming they didn't let him in because he was Japanese. He returned home very sad. As a parent I didn't know what to say so I suffered mentally. I realized at this point that this is what you call prejudice. I, myself, was not persecuted.

Takayama: Do you remember happy memories of rearing children?

Obazawa: As I saw the children grow, it was a great pleasure.

Takayama: Was there any sickness in your family?

Obazawa: Ray's older brother died when he was seven. I originally had three children.

Takayama: Do you remember anything about segregated schools?

Obazawa: In Seattle we had no segregated schools; altho I heard it existed in San Francisco. The children here attended Japanese school after regular school. As far as my children are concerned, they would come home, go to a friends house and then on to Japanese school. I really think they didn't want to go to Japanese school,

Takayama: Did you send your children back to Japan?

Obazawa: No, they were born in US so I wanted them to grow up as Americans. We also bought a house here.

Once, my wife and three children visited Japan. During their stay there they needed a reference from the police headquarters however, they refused to give it to them. So my wife called my big brother who had connections. My brother told my wife to take a box of sweet cakes (omanju) thru the back way of the police department and don't worry about the reference. The very next day they wrote her up a reference.

Takayama: What kind of contributions did you make during the World War II?

Obazawa: I bought US bonds. The wholesalers and others kind of forced me to buy. I bought about \$1000 worth of bonds. Then during the depression I sold them at a loss.

Takayama: Did you get any interest?

Obazawa: I didn't have them that long.

Takayama: When did you come in contact with Christianity?

Obazawa: When I arrived in US I stayed at a Japanese Christian rooming house. It was interesting. It was nice and cheap and people didn't think of talking to me. They had a rooming house to try and win Christians but it would be better to say that within the rooming house dwelt Christians. It was a two story house. The upstairs was a boarding house and the downstairs was a hall.

Takayama: Was the Christian service only on Sunday?

Obazawa: Yes, and also during the middle of the week we had a prayer meeting. It was held at 8:00 p.m. as a lot of the boys had to work half a day or full days on Sundays. Many of the boys would go downtown about 8:00 p.m. and return when the services were just about over. H a, ha, ha. They were all around 20 years old and still liked to play.

DEPRESSION

Takayama: What kind of hardship did you experience?

Obazawa: No matter how hard I worked it was very hard to support the family. There was a mother and daughter that used to come to my store and had an income of \$600. But suddenly they had no income so both of them sold their fur coats and applied for relief getting \$1.25 a week. Navy beans, salted pork, bread and milk were all the items I sold in the grocery store then. The wholesalers would accept the relief checks I had if I purchased an additional \$50 worth of foodstuffs in cash. If I didn't make a profit of \$50 during the week in cash I was in trouble. I also, became ill at this time - thru worry and hard work.

Takayama: When did you decide to stay here permanently?

Obazawa: When I married my wife.

WORLD WAR II

Takayama: What kind of attitude did the whites have towards the Japanese?

Obazawa: There were customer who objected to Japanese. Also, the people that I befriended during the depression were very kind to us during the evacuation time.

I closed the grocery business one year before the war started because I was ill and the property was being sold to a gas station. When I used to bump into the bread truck drivers they used to give me coffee cakes and such, saying this war isn't your fault or mine - that it's a country to country affair.

Takayama: When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, what did you think first of all? How did you feel?

Obazawa: I was shocked. I thought they finally did it! (yatta na to omoimashita)

Takayama: Did you think it was going to happen.

Obazawa: Not really. But Rev. Machida was visiting Seattle then from the Los Angeles area and he said the people in Los Angeles were concerned and excited over the relations between Japan and the US. People in Seattle were rather calm. In October we used to pray about the war. Then in December on a Sunday afternoon I heard about Pearl Harbor from my wife who attended church and got the news there.

Takayama: How did you come to know the Notice of relocation?

Obazawa: I watched the newspapers. The Tolan Committee kept notifying us of the details. All the Japanese leaders were interned. Among our church members there were only three men left; myself and two others.

We stored belongings of the members of our church in the basement and had to adhere to the Fire Department's regulations; the items had to be three feet away from the walls. Just the three of us and young boys were left to do all this work - it was a big job!

Takayama: People thought in those days that if you went to church you'd be safe so people that never before came to church started coming every Sunday. In April of the following year we gave our minister his last salary however gifts continued to come in. I was the treasurer and didn't know what to do with the cash so we gave our minister an extra month's salary.

Takayama: When you got to know about evacuation, how did you feel about the coming event?

Obazawa: We were evacuated toward the last. We saw wives and children leave first, many with no husband and little children crying about their skirts. In one case they had a sick father who had

- Obazawa: to be taken to the County hospital. We waited and waited for
(cont) the ambulance and were quite worried as there was a time deadline of 12 p.m. (noon)
- Takayama: How did you go to the Assembly Center and Relocation Camp?
- Obazawa: We went by bus to Puyallup Assembly Center. It's a fairground place. The relocation center was Minidoka, Idaho.
- Takayama: How did your white friends feel about this?
- Obazawa: Some white friends came to see us off. They were Norweigians and even after we got into camp they used to bring us fresh strawberries with sugar and cream. Even after I had come to Los Angeles these people kept in contact with us. The daughter of this lady notified us that her mother had passed on.
- Takayama: How did you take care of your house, possession and business?
- Obazawa: As I told you before I quit the grocery business one year prior to the war. My home was rented out by a real estate man at \$60 a month furnished.
- Takayama: Did anything get stolen?
- Obazawa: I wanted to sell the house as the renters said they were moving out. My son-in-law was in uniform at the time so we asked him to check up on the house. He said it looked like someone was living in it so we reported it to the WRA. Later on, we asked the government to send our furniture out to Chicago; what came was not our own furniture but some different kind of furniture.
- Takayama: About how much financial loss did you suffer?
- Obazawa: I guess around \$5000. But from the government I got about \$1000. The house was in my daughters name so she got that claim.
- Takayama: How old were your children when you evacuated?
- Obazawa: Ray was 20 years old. My oldest, a daughter was 25.
- Takayama: How did white churches react to this evacuation?
- Obazawa: The churches sent us off very kindly. The Catherine Blaine Home sent us some bicycles. She also donated a building to the Japanese. Other people wanted to sell it however she gave it to the Japanese saying there will be a need for it when they return. Some Filipinos are presently using it now. It is called the Blaine Methodist Church. She was an ex-Seattle mayor, a

Obazawa: pioneer of Seattle and a State Assembly member. Once we
(cont) gave her a suki-yaki party in her home. She gave us \$5 to
pay for her dinner.

ASSEMBLY CENTER

Takayama: What was the condition of the Center?

Obazawa: We heard that Japan was winning the war. I was a block manger
and kept my ears open. There was a Mr. Mitamura from Alaska,
a Keio University graduate; he had a laundry and became
wealthy. He said that everybody thinks Japan is going to win
but I think Japan is going to lose however, I don't say it
publicly.

Takayama: What do you remember about the place itself?

Obazawa: Yes, I have lots to remember/ We had a union church that I
attended. When someone said Japan was losing the people didn't
like it. At this time the government asked for army volunteers.
They asked the cooperation of the block managers and it was
quite a controversial thing. People said no matter if you are
born in US how can one point the gun towards Japan. There were
six volunteers from my block; and they were all from Christian
families.

Takayama: What was the condition of the camp?

Obazawa: When we first went it wasn't organized. When the children got
sick we had problems. I, being the block manager had to take
care of the sick. We had passes to go thru the gates to the
hospital to bring a doctor.

Takayama: Were your buildings ready when you moved to this camp?

Obazawa: No, we had construction going on. They were still dynamiting
the place in order to build buildings.

Takayama: Was the hospital done?

Obazawa: The hospital was the first big building up. Then we got plumbing
and showers later.

Takayama: How were the families housed?

Obazawa: One barrack housed six families. A family per room. Big families took large rooms, small families took small rooms. Our room was just my wife and myself. My son, Ray and Helen went to Spokane and didn't come to camp.

Takayama: What kind of events took place there?

Obazawa: People went to look for greasewood, sagebrush and etc. and would get lost. There was one man who died. We gathered a searching party and started out but the man who had already been lost for two days was found dead.. He was with another person; the other person came home safely.

Some people liked to spread rumors and they spread rumors about the war and etc.

Another event that happened was in connection with our mess hall.

Our block was without a mess hall and we had to inconveniently walk over to another block for our meals. I was a block manager and we complained but the administration did nothing. Finally, my wife and a group of ladies with their children went to the main office and made an appeal. Within a week we had a mess hall.

Takayama: What did you think about the problem of loyalty?

Obazawa: We had great difficulty (komatta yo!). I am loyal to Japan but I am loyal to US also. Someone said that he tried to become an American but he couldn't. The Issei ladies used to cry about this matter. In our camp, we asked that this question be deleted from the questionnaire.

Takayama: How did you think about Nisei volunteering for the army?

Obazawa: In the beginning we all complained. Even if we were outside it was hard to find jobs and there was there was the persecution matter. Many of us thought maybe, after all, its better here in camp. The mothers of these volunteers suffered a lot: the sons kept explaining why they wanted to volunteer. The Christian families accepted more readily. A non-Christian boy who came from a butcher's family visited our camp on a furlough. He told us that

I am an American therefore, I volunteered. The nervousness on this matter gradually subsided.

Takayama: What kind of entertainments, hobbies, and enjoyments did you have in camp?

Obazawa: I don't have any. I was a block manager and looking after the needs of others.

I have a story to tell you. There was a bachelor whose family was in Japan and he wanted me to write him a letter in romaji telling his family that he was all right and for his wife to stay healthy and look after the children. In gratitude, this fellow presented me with a bottle of whiskey in the presence of a third person. This third person liked to drink and wanted to build me a rock garden which he did. I knew he wanted the bottle so I gave it to him warning him not to drink too much at a time.

Takayama: How was your religious life there? Did you go to church?

Obazawa: I went on Sundays only. I was too busy to go to the prayer meetings. I did go out of camp once to see Spokane but returned because we were moving to Chicago.

Takayama: What did you think about the problem of education of children in the camp?

Obazawa: It was a worry. But I trusted that the government would take care of it. I saw a future in accounting and told my son, Ray, to pursue that vocation. Now, I have a friend in Seattle who has four children doing accounting. Even during depression there's work for an accountant.

Takayama: How was the camp school?

Obazawa: My children were through with school.

Takayama: Did you have high schools?

Obazawa: Yes, we had high schools. Many of the older Sunday School members taught school.

Takayama: Did you have white teachers?

Obazawa: Yes, we did. I heard about a caucasian teacher who had a 10 year old and an infant who travelled to our camp to teach. This started his interest in travelling and he has become a traveller ever since.

Takayama: What kind of meaningful things do you remember in camp?

Obazawa: When I was in camp I didn't think about this. But now, physically, I think camp life was good for the Japanese. They used to work morning to night never taking a vacation. They used to look for jobs that required seven days of work wanting to get more money. But while in camp they took life easy for the first time in their lives.

Takayama: Did your faith change during the camp period?

Obazawa: A person that I had liked for 23 years revealed his true bad traits in camp and it was a big disappointment to me. However, a weekly news wrote about us when we relocated to Chicago. It stated how very proud they were to be able to have the Obazawas as their neighbors. It made us feel very good and church people came to visit us. My faith in people returned to me.

RESETTLEMENT

Takayama: When did you leave camp?

Obazawa: In 1944 to Chicago: my daughter sent for us. For one year I was a dishwasher. Then I worked as a coffee maker, making 28¢ of coffee each day for a big firm. The cleaning up was a mess. I became a coffee addict there as I tasted it all.

Takayama: Did you go to a hostel?

Obazawa: No. My daughter relocated first and rented a house. The landlord's son was also in the armed forces and after hearing our plight she rented to us. She never rented to Japanese and wanted a reference. We got a reference from a Catholic father that we knew in camp. We got a three bedroom house which was hard to get in those days. The G.I.'s used to visit our house frequently. I used to bring home two cakes that I got at a special price; finally I ended bringing home four cakes.

Takayama: Did white churches take care of you?

Obazawa: Yes, they helped us. They gave us the use of their building and also visited us.

Takayama: How did Japanese Churches reconstruct themselves?

Obazawa: In Chicago we had afternoon services in a white church building . loaned out to us. Eventually the First Methodist Church paid the Japanese ministers. To become an independent church it took around 10 years. I'd say about 1965.

Takayama: How was the attitude of whites towards you after the war?

Obazawa: It was hard even to purchase a car. They didn't want to sell it to us. If one wanted to start a grocery business they wouldn't give them a beer license.

Takayama: How did you find a house? Job?

Obazawa: I was in Chicago.

Takayama: Did you come from Chicago to Pasadena?

Obazawa: Yes I did. In Chicago my daughter bought a house.

Takayama: What was the most difficult experience you had during this time?

Obazawa: The war. We lost all of our foundations. And we got too old to start over in the same kind of businesses we had. However, I hear that in Seattle today, the Japanese are beginning to own the #1 type of hotels, because Japanese lawyers, dentists and etc. have money to invest.

APPENDIX

Takayama: As a Christian what is your hope for the future?

Obazawa: Peace is number one! to live in peace. Not only for Christians but for all the peoples of the world.